

**THE LIFE OF BALZAC**

PEN SKETCH OF THE GREAT FRENCH LITERARY GENIUS.

**Overlastingly in Debt, He Concocted the Wildest Schemes For Making Money—The Tragedy of His Wooing and Wedding Mme. Hanska.**

The life story of Honore de Balzac is infinitely more fascinating than any of the tales that riddled from his facile pen, and the wonder is that scores of needy authors have not seized upon such rich material and turned it into gold.

Balzac was not only a Frenchman, but a genius, truly a wild combination. At first he thought he wanted to be a lawyer, then a millionaire, then something else, his desires all through life fairly tumbling over each other. At one time he had "two immense and gale desires—to be famous and to be loved." "I had determined from my childhood that I would be a great man. I said with Andre Chenier as I struck my forehead, 'There is something beneath that.' I felt, I believed, the thought within me that I must express."

In his early youth Balzac did not succeed to his liking in impressing woman with his importance. "With tears of mortification I bowed before the decision of the world, but my distress was not barren. I determined to revenge myself on society. I would dominate the feminine intellect and so have the feminine soul at my mercy. All eyes should be fixed upon me when the servant at the door announced my name." "What he has begun with the sword," he said of Napoleon, "I shall finish with the pen."

There was much of the child in him to the end of his days. He was everlastingly in debt; the artist's life, he said, must be a splendid one. Sometimes when he was surrounded by the costliest bric-a-brac he had not enough money to buy food. He took coffee to keep himself awake, and he wrote and wrote till he was exhausted, all the time being in the condition of a "tracked hare," harassed and pursued by his creditors and knowing that all his gains must go to them. He made elaborate secret plans to attend the rehearsals of his plays.

As the place of Balzac's abode was kept strictly secret for fear of his creditors, the time of the rehearsal each day was to be communicated to him by a messenger from the theater, who was told to walk in the Champs Elysees toward the Arc de l'Etoile. At the twentieth tree on the left, past the circle, he would find a man who would appear to be looking for a bird in the branches. The messenger was to say to him, "I have it," and the man would answer, "As you have it, what are you waiting for?" On receiving this reply the emissary from the Odéon would hand over the paper and depart without looking behind him. The only comment that Lireux, who appears to have been a practical man, made on these curious arrangements was that if the twentieth tree had been struck by lightning during the night he supposed that the servant must stop at the twenty-first, and Balzac assented gravely to this proposition.

Balzac concocted the wildest schemes for making money, such as the covering of his garden with glass houses for the production of pineapples, by which he was to make 400,000 francs a year, and the transplantation of 60,000 oaks from Russia to France, by which he was persuaded 1,200,000 francs could be earned. But when these schemes failed—and he usually got tired of them when the excitement of working them out had subsided—he always had a play or a novel in his pocket by which the pressure of his creditors could be at least temporarily reduced.

But the tragedy of Balzac's life was his long wooing of Mme. Hanska. The acquaintance began with a letter from the lady, who deprecated Balzac's views of women as expressed in his "La Peau de Chagrin." Balzac was strongly influenced by the letter. He replied to it, and notwithstanding the fact that she was a married lady, he was soon hopelessly in love with his unknown correspondent. Soon he is writing, "I love you, unknown, and this strange thing is the natural effect of an empty and unhappy life only filled with ideas." "You are in all my thoughts, in all the lines that I shall trace, in all the moments of my life, in all my being, in my hair which grows for you." Eventually they met secretly, exchanged their first kiss under the shade of a great oak at Neufchatel and promised to wait for each other.

In 1841 Mme. Hanska's husband died, and then began for Balzac a period of hope deferred that lasted for nine years and broke his health, so that when at last the great lady consented to become Mme. Honore de Balzac he had no longer the strength to enjoy his long deferred happiness. Five months after the wedding he was in his grave. There seems to be little doubt that all the love was on one side and that Mme. Hanska had outlived the romance of her early interest in the great novelist. "Three days ago," wrote Balzac, "I married the only woman I ever loved, whom I love more than ever and whom I shall love till death. This union is, I think, the recompense which God has had in reserve for me after so much adversity, so many years of work, so much gone through and overcome. I am nearly mad with happiness."

His happiness, alas, was of short duration. Endless instructions had Balzac sent home to his manservant and to his relatives as to the preparations for the reception of his bride, but the home coming was a tragic occurrence.

The house was brilliantly lighted, but there was no response to the master's continued knocking, for poor Francois, the manservant, overwrought by the strain of the situation, had gone mad, and the travelers had to wait in their carriage till the door could be forced—a sad ending of a miserable journey! From Balzac's idealization of the woman he had wooed so long he gradually awoke. Utter moral collapse and vertigo were his portion. He was only fifty-one when he died at Paris in 1850, and the death of Mme. de Balzac occurred in the same year. Balzac's treasures were left to Mme. de Balzac's married daughter.

The very day of her funeral Mme. Georges Minzsch's creditors pushed her and her maid into the street and rifled the house in the Rue Fontaine. The booty was transported to the auction room known as l'Hotel Drouot, and there a sale was held by order of justice of Balzac's library, his book cabinets and some of his manuscripts, including that of "Eugenie Grandet," which had been given to Mme. Hanska on Dec. 23, 1833. During the shameful pillage of the house the vultures who ransacked it found evidence of the most reckless, the most imbecile, extravagance. One room was filled with boxes containing hats, and in another piles of costly silks were heaped untouched since their arrival from the fashionable haberdasher or silk mercer. Balzac's treasures, the curiosities he had amassed with so much trouble, the pictures of which he had been so proud, were ruthlessly seized, while precious manuscripts and letters which would perhaps have brought in 100,000 francs if they had been put up for sale were thrown out of the window by the exasperated throng.—Kansas City Independent.

**CURIOUS PLEASURES.**

**They Were Costly as Well, Since the Price Was Death.**

The late King Ludwig of Bavaria frequently ordered performances of opera for his private delectation, but an Englishman, Curtis Donnythorpe, maintained for his personal entertainment a troupe of dancers, at one time one of the most noted organizations of the English music hall stage.

Mr. Donnythorpe was an invalid and, being unable to gratify his passion for dancing in his own person, engaged the Kelly troupe. He had a stage built in his home, whereon they performed daily. It was his habit to suggest new steps, and while encouraging them to fresh endeavor one day he brought on the attack of heart disease which ended his life.

He was not the only one killed by his pleasures, for Theodore Botley, another Englishman, devoted his whole life to his stomach. He had agents throughout the world in search of new dishes, and, that he might eat more frequently than nature demanded, it was his practice to engage in manual labor for the purpose of getting up an appetite. He had the largest library on the subject of eating that has ever been gathered together. In the end he died of starvation because his stomach was unable to assimilate ordinary nourishing foods.

He had his complement in Charles P. Cashel, in whom the sense of smell was as keenly developed as it is in a hunting dog. He revealed in the richest perfumes and in the end lost his sense of smell completely through overindulgence in the perfume of a South American flower. This left him unable to detect the odor of escaping gas, and he was asphyxiated.

The Russian Count Ivanovitch of the time of the first Emperor Nicholas died of fright at the announcement that the emperor had declared his intention of visiting him and sending him to labor in the salt mines if he did not leave his bed to welcome him. For years he had never left his bed and indulged in liquid foods as being the more easy to eat.—New York Herald.

**Not a Wedding.**

It was just one of the sights we see in a great city—see, pass by and forget. An Italian boy not more than twenty years old, washed clean and dressed in his stiff Sunday suit, was seated in an open carriage which had cost him a week's pay for the afternoon. His arm was laid tenderly about the shoulders of the sweet faced girl who sat beside him, decked in her pure white bridal array. They did not speak. Their eyes were fixed sadly on the little white thing that rested on their knees. The day was cold, but they did not heed it. They heeded nothing but the little white thing across their knees.

"Hello, Bill!" a man on a coal wagon greeted the driver of the carriage. "Weddin', eh?"

Bill shook his head. That was all. Then the man on the coal wagon looked again and saw the little white coffin.

"Excuse me, Bill," said he, and took off his cap.—Brooklyn Eagle.

**Another Sort of Fowl.**

"The impudence of that young brother of mine!" exclaimed Mrs. Nagget. "He just told me I was no chicken when I married you."

"Well," replied her unsympathetic husband, "that's true enough. You weren't a chicken, were you?"

"No; I was a goose."—Catholic Standard and Times.

**Weather Wise.**

Thirty-two people had been arrested for speeding their autos in a little town. At dusk the justice sat in his office counting the proceeds. As he finished he turned, smiling, to his clerk and said:

"It has been a fine day."—Lippincott's Magazine.

**DARING WILD BRUTES.**

**The Panthers of India and How They Secure Their Prey.**

In certain parts of India the panther is named "bipat," which means calamity, for he is an ever present scourge among the people. His proper name is tendwa. It is the habit of these panthers for a family of them to quarter themselves on a circle of villages within convenient distance of their nightly prowlings. As soon as the sun is below the horizon they sail forth from the cover of the surrounding forests and watch the paths by which the village herds and flocks return to their resting places. If a meal cannot be secured there, later on they enter a village and patrol the dark lanes in the boldest manner. Nothing comes amiss to them that is not too large and heavy for their strength.

Children, dogs, goats and the young cattle are their favorite quarry. They are bold enough to dash into a hut even with a light burning in it, seize their prey, then rush away with lightning speed and, with a noiselessness that is marvelous, retreat with their prize to the nearest cover and there devour it. In the morning the poor villager, following the tracks of the retreating animal, soon arrives at the few remains of his goat or calf or maybe his child.

In the following way the natives get their revenge: A stray dog is caught in the village and is tied out on the path generally frequented by the panther family. The bait is carried off during the night and devoured close by. Next day a machan (platform) is fixed in a convenient tree, and in the evening a kid is tied on the spot occupied by the dog on the previous night. The sportsman settles himself in the machan before sunset and begins his watch.

Terrified by his lonely position, the kid begins a frantic bleating, which soon attracts the panther marauders, which are skulking about near the spot where they found their last meal. A short stalk soon brings them to the kid and directly under the concealed sportsman, who shoots the beasts. It is impossible to follow the panthers into the impenetrable cover they frequent, and they never show themselves in daylight.—Chicago News.

**Tin.**

Who first found tin? There is a legend among the Cornish miners that St. Piran, an Irish hermit, was the discoverer. His ancient church in the parish of Perranzabuloe, in Cornwall, laid bare of sand by the sea many years ago, has recently been repaired. Cornish miners still keep the feast of St. Piran, who, according to the fable, first found tin, forgetting that their forefathers had long previously sold it to the Phoenicians. Possibly the legend points to the fact that this Irishman was a skillful metallurgist.

**A Correction.**

"This," said the professor of anatomy as he exhibited a human jawbone, "is the inferior maxillary."

"I beg your pardon, professor," said one of the married students, "but didn't I understand you to say the skeleton you have before us belonged to a female?"

"I did."

"In that case, then, there is no inferior maxillary."

**English as She Is Written.**

The publication which was once brought out in Portugal bearing the title "English as She Is Spoke" has for a long time enjoyed a worldwide reputation. Tourists on the continent of Europe sometimes come across examples of English quite as curious as that of the Portuguese author.

In the bedroom of a hotel at Genoa the following notice was found: "The lamentations of the waiters are obliged to be made at the bureau." It was in a hotel also, and not a church, that the following request was made in writing: "Visitors are prayed into dinner when the bell rings, that they may not disturb the order of the service." There is a hotel advertisement in Calais station to the following effect: "Quite a peculiar animation resides at this fashionable spot of Paris. In the rear the grand opera of a splendid architecture on one side of the Grand hotel, entirely made afresh and in a more extensive way, is the meeting of all strangers of distinction." Finally, this curious legend has recently been seen on a notice board on a garden wall in Jersey, one of the Channel Islands: "Any dog found in this garden the proprietors of the dog paid one pound sterling for each times."

**Easing the Pressure.**

"Mr. Kiljordan," said the young man with the bill, "would it be convenient for you to—"

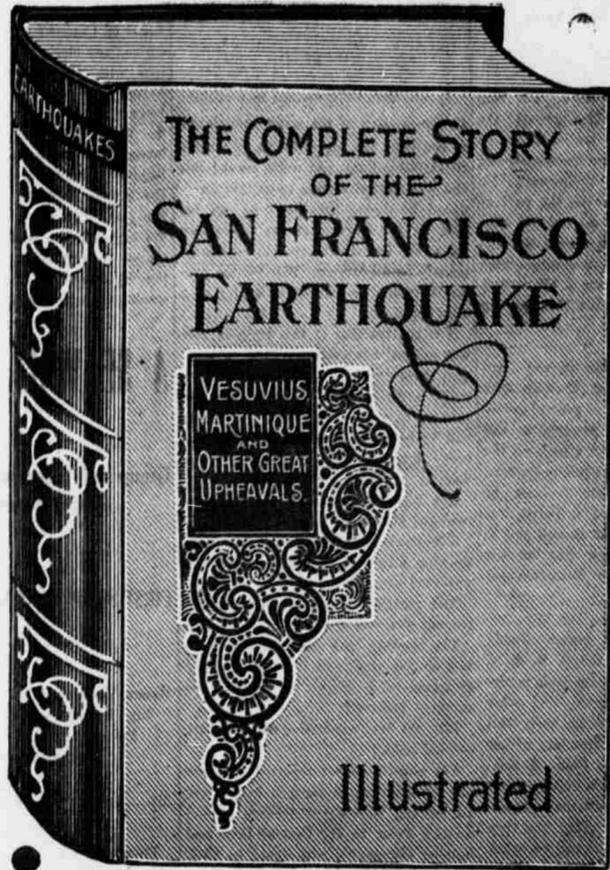
"No, it wouldn't!" stormily interrupted Kiljordan, looking up with blood in his eye. "You addle pated idiot, don't you know enough not to interrupt a man when he's at work? The payment of this installment isn't due till tomorrow anyhow, you daddled lunkhead! For half a cent I'd throw you out of the window. Take your gumdasted face out of here or I'll—"

The terrified youth waited to hear no more. He darted out through the door and made for the stairway, down which he went three steps at a time.

"What alls you, Kiljordan?" asked the man at the other desk. "Why did you try to scare that boy half to death?"

"I've no grudge against the boy," he answered, turning to his work, "but I couldn't swear at the woman with the gentle manner and the neighborhood charity scheme who buzzed me for half an hour before he came in, and I had to let out on somebody."—Chicago Tribune.

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